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# FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM: AMEMBASSY, TAIPEI

DESP. NO. 115

DATE: September 1, 1954

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SUBJECT: Efforts to Create an Opposition Party on Formosa

## SUMMARY

In recent months, particularly since the charge of totalitarianism directed against the National Government by K. C. WU, there has been some discussion over the possibility of creating an effective opposition party on Formosa. Various proposals have been advanced by President CHIANG, Dr. HU Shih, and minor party representatives. However, none of them appear to have any chance of adoption; and the dominant position of the Kuomintang is likely to remain unchallenged at least until the question of the recovery of the mainland is resolved. At the same time, the changes in the Kuomintang, which have been taking place during the past four years, have stressed tighter discipline and a stronger centralized control over the party organization. This has tended to reduce the opportunity for the inter-play of opposing interests among the various groups within the Kuomintang itself and emphasize the authoritarian aspects of one party rule.

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## Introduction

To those Western-educated Chinese who are seriously interested in the development of a democratic system of government for China, the question of how to evolve from the present one-party domination of the Kuomintang into a situation where two or more parties compete on relatively equal terms has been a political problem of major concern. Since the move to Formosa, the two minor parties which accompanied the government -- the Democratic-Socialist Party and the Young China Party -- have been ineffective as political opposition to the Kuomintang. They have built up no following of any significance in Formosa and have continued to exist as organizations largely in order to receive the subsidy and occasional position, doled out to them by the government in order to preserve the appearance of a multi-party system.

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In studying how to correct this situation, many Chinese have shown an interest in the example of Turkey, where after 20 years of one party rule, a government-sponsored opposition party won an overwhelming victory in a free election. A number of suggestions have been made as to how a party sufficiently strong to offer effective competition to the Kuomintang could be brought into existence in the near future. Dr. HU Shih during his recent visit to Formosa proposed that the various factions of the Kuomintang, which are still discernible especially within the Legislative Yuan, should become separate parties and create a parliamentary cabinet system along western European lines. In Dr. Hu's opinion, such a development would remove the question of loyalty to President CHIANG, which the President has in the past tended to identify with loyalty to China and the anti-Communist cause. This attitude on the part of Chiang creates a strong psychological deterrent to the growth of a true multi-party system. Another proposal, reportedly favored by President Chiang, was that Dr. Hu should organize a new party combining some of the independent Kuomintang members together with the minor parties and opposition leaders overseas. One other suggestion put forward has been that the two minor parties should simply amalgamate their existing party organizations on Formosa into a single opposition party.

Kuomintang Views

The charges of one-party rule and totalitarianism made to the American press by K. C. WU brought a renewed consideration on the part of the Chinese Government to the problem of development of a responsible political opposition to the Kuomintang in order to place this government in a more favorable light in the eyes of the Western nations and particularly the United States. For the past several months, there has been a number of reports of renewed attempts by the Government to secure an amalgamation of the two minor parties into a single opposition party. Recently, in a private discussion, the former Secretary-General of the Central Committee of the Kuomintang, Dr. CHANG Ch'i-yun, gave his views on the problem. His remarks on this occasion may be presumed to reflect in general the thinking of President Chiang as well as the official position of the Kuomintang.

Dr. Chang stated that last March prior to the departure of Dr. Hu Shih for the United States, President Chiang asked Hu either to form a new opposition party or to bring together under his (Hu's) leadership the present opposition groups. Dr. Hu declined on the grounds of poor health and because he was a scholar and not a politician. Following this, President Chiang invited 8 members each of the Young China and Democratic-Socialist Parties to a meeting. At this meeting, Chiang asked them, in view of their present weakness, to unite and form a single opposition party which would have more chance of becoming an effective opposition to the Kuomintang. No concrete

action has been taken as a result of the President's request, however.

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Dr. Chang asserted that the Chinese Government is following a policy of toleration of criticism and wishes to see the growth of a sound opposition party. He cited the case of the recent election for mayor of Taipei. The independent candidate, KAO Yu-shu, who defeated the Kuomintang candidate, according to Dr. Chang, violated the election law during his campaign. He went into the poor districts of the city and stated that if he were elected he would not tear down the dwellings built by refugees upon city property. Since these buildings were put up illegally, this was a promise that Kao will not be able to keep. Dr. Chang said because of Kao's violation of the election laws, the Kuomintang would have been justified in having his election annulled. As a show of its good faith and adherence to democratic principles, however, the government did not do this and allowed Kao to take office.[1]

According to the opinion expressed by Dr. Chang, the real problem of political opposition to the Kuomintang lies in the question of leadership. Neither of the two minor parties on Formosa possess any leaders worth mentioning, especially with the death of the Young China Party chairman and the absence of Democratic Socialist chairman Carson CHANG in the United States. Both parties have been further weakened by internal quarrels. Dr. Chang said Hu Shih might have supplied the leadership necessary for the creation of a new opposition party, but he has refused to do so. Had it not been for the leadership of President Chiang, Dr. Chang continued, the Kuomintang would have disintegrated long ago. An opposition party can not be simply called forth at the beck of a finger; it requires a leader to dramatize and pull it together.

A second necessary element for the creation of an opposition party, according to Dr. Chang, is time. A party can not be created overnight, he said, nor by orders from above, but must grow upwards

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1. During the campaign Kao was accused of violating the election law and was warned by the Supervisory Committee. The election returns in Taipei, showing Kao's victory over the Kuomintang candidate, were held up half a day -- apparently until a meeting of the Kuomintang leaders could be called. This meeting made the decision not to throw out Kao's election, reportedly on the direct order of President Chiang. See Embdes 688, June 10, 1954, "Provincial Elections on Formosa, April 18 - May 2, 1954". Accusation of the violation of the election laws, which are unrealistically stringent, has been used frequently as a tactic to discredit opposition candidates in the local elections.

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from the people. It took many years of struggle and sacrifice before the Kuomintang was able to establish itself. Also, a party must be based upon a set of principles. For this reason, if no other, Hu Shih's suggestion that the Kuomintang split into several parties is impossible. The Kuomintang is founded upon the Three Peoples' Principles; an opposition party must derive its own set of principles which constitute its main reason for coming into existence, Dr. Chang concluded.

Minor Party Opinion.

A Former Minister without Portfolio of the Executive Yuan and one of the leading members of the Standing Committee of the Democratic-Socialist Party, CHIANG Yun-t'ien, also mentioned to the RO the luncheon meeting which President Chiang had with members of the minor parties (referred to above by Dr. Chang). While relating the request that the two parties merge to form a single opposition party, Mr. Chiang stressed the reply made to the President: that if an improvement in the situation were really desired, this could be obtained by the President's resigning from his position as Director-General of the Kuomintang and placing himself, as head of the nation, above politics. This should be followed by the cessation of all discrimination against non-Kuomintang members and critics of the government. In subsequent discussions, Mr. Chiang, as well as other minor party leaders, have stated privately that there is little chance that the two minor parties will amalgamate in view of the long period of separate historical development behind each.

Generally, minor party leaders have taken the position that the way to remedy the unsatisfactory situation of political opposition on Formosa is not by creating a new party or amalgamating the two existing ones. It only can be done by ending the present policy of discrimination on the part of the government against members of the minor parties and attempting sincerely to create an atmosphere of tolerance in which the minor parties would be able to develop freely. Minor party members feel that the government and the Kuomintang have fostered an attitude of suspicion towards opponents of the Kuomintang and that too many officials equate loyalty to the Kuomintang with loyalty to China and to the anti-Communist cause. In short, they say it is not the lack of party organizations but the attitude of the government itself which has stifled the growth of political parties other than the Kuomintang in Free China.

HSIEH Han-ju, one of the able young men in Democratic Socialist Party whose attempt to form a discussion group within that party was one of the factors in its present split,[2] recently told the RO again firmly that the two parties would not join together. He said, however, if Carson Chang should return to Formosa, he might be able to build up a substantial following and make the Democratic Socialist Party into a formidable opponent for the Kuomintang. In Mr. Hsieh's

2. Embdes 620, April 30, 1954, "Dispute Within Democratic-Socialist Party."

opinion, this was the only hope at the present time for creating an effective opposition party on Formosa. Even such project, he said, would need some assurance of American assistance.

Formosan Party Prospects

There is no political party on Formosa today whose leadership is Formosan or which represents Formosan opinion. From time to time in the past, members of the Embassy have received requests from various Formosans to lend support or sponsor the formation of a "Formosan Democratic Association" which would develop as a Formosan political party. With such support necessarily not forthcoming, the various projects apparently failed to have come to materialize. The attitude of the government has been characterized to the RO by Peter CHANG, former Director of the Information Office of the Provincial Government, a member of the Kuomintang, and a mainland Chinese. Chang stated that the present time is not considered propitious for the formation of a political party representing Formosan views. Such a party, it is feared, would be likely to come up with a slogan such as "Formosa for the Formosans", which while not communistic in itself would play into the hands of the communists.[3] Following the local elections in April of this year, two prominent independent Formosan members of the Provincial Assembly, LI Wan-chu and KUO Yu-hsin, in a private conversation expressed the wish that they could form a Formosan Party. They said, however, that the government attitude made any such project impossible.

Legally, there is nothing to prevent the formation of a new political party provided it is anti-communist. In the view of the government, however, anti-communism is inseparable from the basic policy of "resist Russia and recover the Mainland". Since a Formosan party would not necessarily subscribe to the latter, sufficient excuse can be found for preventing any attempt in this direction. Moreover, the strict control and supervision over organized groups by the Ministry of Interior as well as the power of arrest exercised by the Peace Preservation Corps and Secret Police under the anti-subversion regulations does discourage the formation of groups which might for one reason or another be doubtful of government sanction or favor and around which the nucleus for a Formosan political opposition to the Kuomintang might grow.

CONCLUSION

Last February at the time of the re-election of President Chiang by the National Assembly, Dr. Hu Shih in speaking of the efforts to have an opposing candidate run in the election remarked that: "It is no fun to win a race if there is no competition". Whether for this reason, to refute K. C. Wu's charges of totalitarianism before

3. Embdes 135, September 13, 1953, "Formosan Political Opinion Under Chinese National Rule."

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western public opinion, or from a simple desire to improve democratic practices by providing a real alternative in the local elections, President Chiang since his re-election has supported the idea of creating a single strong opposition party. His efforts in this direction, however, have been limited to the possibility of amalgamating the two existing minor parties and perhaps other independent leaders. Such a move has been opposed by the minor parties who wish to maintain their organization and identity, and it is unlikely that the idea will be pushed in the near future.

Dr. Hu Shih's suggestion for the formation of Kuomintang cliques into separate political parties reflects the type of government envisaged in the Chinese Constitution. This involves a cabinet system similar to that of England and France where the Premier (President of the Executive Yuan) is the chief executive officer of the government and responsible to the legislature. Chiang, however, while President has concurrently held the position of Director-General of the Kuomintang. In the latter position, by issuing orders through the Kuomintang Standing Central Committee to the Premier (who must be a member of the Kuomintang), he is able to control the government. Dr. Hu would change the situation by splitting the Kuomintang itself into several separate parties which would contend in the Legislative for the right to form the cabinet. From this, he hoped there would develop the foundation of a true parliamentary system.

The proposal of Dr. Hu, although it aroused a certain interest within some sections of the Kuomintang, goes against the trend of a more unified, disciplined party organization and has been rejected by President Chiang. There is no prospect that it will be adopted at the present time. Nor is there any likelihood that Chiang will accept the suggestion by minor party leaders that he resign his concurrent position of Kuomintang Director-General and as President place himself above politics. This would involve the risk on Chiang's part of finding himself in a similar position to that in which Acting President LI Tsung-jen was placed following Chiang's retirement from the Presidency in 1949.

The attitude of President Chiang and many of his closest advisers towards the Kuomintang and the minor parties or independent leaders was conditioned by their experiences of the 1920-30s. In the work of unifying China, Chiang regarded the Kuomintang as his chosen instrument and loyalty on the part of civil officials and the army to the party and to him personally was absolutely necessary. Habits of long standing are difficult to alter, and many of the more liberal minded Chinese doubt that Chiang will ever be able to rid himself of his distrust of anyone who disagrees with him. In any event, there is discrimination against the minor parties which hinders their development on Formosa, and this is likely to continue to a greater or lesser degree. While the atmosphere on Formosa is

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not particularly conducive to the development of a political opposition, it should also be pointed out that neither the leadership nor program of the two existing minor parties is such that, even under the best of conditions, would seem to entitle them to sufficient strength to challenge the position of the Kuomintang.

The only group on Formosa which potentially has the material out of which an effective opposition political party might develop is the native Formosan community. The policy of the National Government precludes the formation of any political group representing exclusively or controlled by Formosan interests. This will undoubtedly continue to be so as long as the eyes of the National Government are directed towards the mainland. Not only could a Formosan party threaten the control of the Kuomintang in the local elections, but also it could not be counted upon to support the policy of building Formosa as a base for the counter-attack of the mainland nor the claim to represent the only legal government for all of China. Under these conditions, it could prove dangerous to the continuation of the present policy of the National Government to encourage the growth of a political opposition party based upon the Formosan population.[4]

Since the retreat of the National Government from the mainland, the trend within the Kuomintang has been in the direction of strengthening party organization, tightening discipline, eliminating internal disputes, and enforcing acceptance of the decisions of the Central Standing Committee upon all members. The period of party reform, 1950-1952, was directed towards eliminating corruption and factionalism within the party and re-establishing party discipline, all considered important contributing factors in the defeat by the Communists. This trend has continued under the Central Committee elected in October 1952. At the plenary session of the Central Committee in the early part of August (1954), the two most important decisions concerned an effort to reinvigorate the party "small units" in order to strengthen party organization at the basic strata and measures to strengthen discipline over Kuomintang members of the Control and Legislative Yuans.[5] One aspect of the tightening

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4. The Kuomintang has encouraged successful Formosan politicians to join the party and has expanded its membership among the Formosans as a whole. This has not, however, affected the control of the Central Committee nor the basic policy of the Kuomintang which remains in the hands of the mainland Chinese.

5. Embdes 91, August 19, 1954, "Pleanry Session of Kuomintang Central Committee, August 2-5,1954"; Embdes 107, August 30, 1954, "Additional Information Relating to Plenary Session of Kuomintang."

of centralized control within the party organization was illustrated in the recent local elections when the Kuomintang adopted a system of party candidates. This system, under which no Kuomintang member other than those designated by the party organization was permitted to become a candidate for election, meant that where formerly often there was at least a contest between two Kuomintang members running for the same local office, now party nomination -- for the most part -- was tantamount to election. Although this change, like others, has been justified in terms of western democratic practice, in the absence of other organized political groups of any comparable strength to the Kuomintang the effect is different.[6]

LEI Chen, Editor of Free China, has analyzed the development of the Kuomintang in recent years in the following terms. In accomplishing its great work of unifying China, the Kuomintang adopted a broad policy and welcomed the absorbtion of all elements into itself. As a result, the inter-play within the party of this great variety of interests and opinions enabled the Kuomintang to be truly representative of all of China. On Formosa, however, the effort to eliminate differences within the Party and establish a strong centralized control over members from the top downward has meant that the Kuomintang no longer represents the many conflicting elements of all parts of China, but can only embody the interests of one segment. Since the Kuomintang has remained in control of the government, and the growth of other political groupings able to represent effectively differences of policy has not been fostered, the result has been inevitably to strengthen the authoritarian aspects of the government. Mr. Lei pointed out that there were two alternatives which might improve the situation; a return to the broad, all-inclusive policy within the Kuomintang itself or the building up of a strong opposition party which had the potentiality of challenging Kuomintang control.

As has been pointed out, there is little prospect that an effective opposition party can be brought into being on Formosa in the near future and alter the situation which--despite such limitations as the Kuomintang may voluntarily place upon itself -- will continue to be, in effect, one-party rule. In a recent discussion with a member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Kuomintang concerning party organization, the reporting officer remarked it must be very difficult, particularly on the part of the older Kuomintang members, to adjust ones thinking from the concept of a revolutionary party to that of a political party existing under

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6. Embdes 688, June 10, 1954, "Provincial Elections on Formosa, April 18 - May 2, 1954"

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a constitutional government. The source agreed that this has been true, but he preferred to consider the problem in terms of whether in the future development of Kuomintang party organization the communist-totalitarian model should continue to predominate or that of western democratic parties be adopted. He expressed the opinion that there was little chance of a major change in the latter direction as long as the problem of Communist subversion remained and the question of the recovery of the mainland was unresolved.

A copy of this despatch has been pouched to Hong Kong.

For the Ambassador:

Robert W. Rinden
First Secretary of Embassy

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